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Letter dated 5 August 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, as President of the Security Council for the month of August, the United Kingdom has scheduled a briefing on 19 August to mark World Humanitarian Day. The briefing will focus on the protection of humanitarian workers, under the agenda item on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

In order to help steer the discussion on the subject, the United Kingdom has prepared a concept note (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mark **Lyall Grant**

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Annex to the letter dated 5 August 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note: Security Council open briefing on World Humanitarian Day, 19 August 2014

Introduction

On 19 August 2014 (World Humanitarian Day), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as President of the Security Council, will hold an open meeting of the Council, in briefing format, on the protection of humanitarian workers, under the agenda item on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Context

World Humanitarian Day is dedicated to the efforts of humanitarian workers around the world, including those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. It commemorates the 2003 attack on the United Nations compound in Baghdad, when 22 United Nations staff were killed, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Iraq and former Emergency Relief Coordinator and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Despite the efforts of humanitarian workers to reach and bring lifesaving assistance to people in need, attacks on personnel (including murders, kidnappings and arrests) and humanitarian assets (including humanitarian supplies, facilities and vehicles) in situations of armed conflict have increased, in particular in countries on the Security Council agenda (Afghanistan, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic have the highest rates of attacks on humanitarian workers).

In the decade since the 2003 attack in Baghdad, aid worker casualties have tripled, reaching over 100 deaths per year.[a] The bombing of the United Nations compound in Mogadishu and the attack against the International Organization for Migration in Afghanistan in 2013 are just two recent examples of attacks on United Nations staff that have had a direct impact on the ability of humanitarian workers to conduct effective operations and reach people in need.

The aim of the briefing is to bring international attention to this critical issue, consider the reasons for the increase in attacks, with a particular focus on countries on the Security Council agenda, and assess the tools at the disposal of the Council to ensure greater respect for international humanitarian law and accountability for those who perpetrate attacks against aid workers. The briefing follows the format of the previous debate on a similar issue, held under the Presidency of Argentina on 19 August 2013.

The briefing could be an opportunity to assess the scope for developing a Security Council product building on resolution 1502 (2003) of 26 August 2003 on the protection of humanitarian workers.

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[a] Humanitarian Outcomes, Aid Worker Security Database (https://aidworkersecurity.org).

Role of the Security Council

The Security Council frequently discusses humanitarian issues in countries affected by conflict. This briefing is an opportunity to focus on the protection of humanitarian workers in such conflict situations.

The Security Council engages in the issue of the protection of humanitarian workers, in both its country-specific and thematic work. In its 2013 presidential statement on the protection of civilians (S/PRST/2013/2), the Council condemned all acts of violence and other forms of intimidation deliberately directed at humanitarian personnel. Council resolutions on Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen have also addressed a similar set of humanitarian issues (see enclosure for examples).

It is essential that the Security Council consider the protection of humanitarian workers and their assets in a holistic way, including in accordance with the objectives set out below.

Objectives of the briefing

The briefing aims to tackle the following issues:

- The linkages between and the respective roles of humanitarian actors in conflict-affected States and the role of the Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the impact on humanitarian operations of an absence of peace and security.
- The role of Council mandates and peacekeeping operations in supporting the protection of humanitarian workers and creating safe conditions in which they can operate.
- The impact of violence against humanitarian workers and their assets on humanitarian operations, including with regard to access, and on affected people.
- The role of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the additional protocols of 1977, as well as customary international humanitarian law, and the importance of the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in ensuring acceptance for humanitarian action and the security of humanitarian workers.
- The need for accountability for attacks against humanitarian workers, considering the tools at the disposal of the United Nations and the Council to ensure accountability, including support for national authorities in conducting investigations and prosecutions, the use of commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions and, in some circumstances, sanctions.
- The impact of the proliferation of non-State actors on humanitarian operating environments.

Enclosure

Proposed briefers

- Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross
- Masood Karokhail, Director of The Liaison Office

Precedents

- The impact of insecurity on humanitarian operations, including with regard to access: in its resolution 2100 (2013) on Mali, the Security Council expressed concern over the insecurity which hinders humanitarian access, exacerbated by the presence of armed groups and terrorist and criminal networks.
- Freedom of movement of humanitarian workers: in its resolution 2061 (2012) on Iraq, the Security Council urged all those concerned to promote the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel.
- Creating the conditions for humanitarian workers to operate: in its resolution 2100 (2013) on Mali, the Security Council set out the role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in contributing to the creation of a secure environment for the safe, civilian-led delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Background material

- Security Council resolutions: specifically, resolution 1502 (2003), but also both country-specific and thematic resolutions.
- Reports of the Secretary-General: on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (A/68/489), on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (e.g., S/2013/689) and relevant reports on Security Council mandates (e.g., the report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2014/140)).
- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "To stay and deliver: good practice for humanitarians in complex security environments" (2011). This report sets out the increasingly difficult operating environment for humanitarian workers, recommendations on policy responses and references to relevant legal documents.
- International Committee of the Red Cross, "Health care in danger: making the case" (2011). This report contains data on violence against health-care workers, facilities and beneficiaries in 16 countries, including in countries on the Security Council agenda (Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya and Somalia).
- Humanitarian Outcomes, Aid Worker Security Database. This database makes it possible to collect information and provide analysis on violence against humanitarian workers around the world. The 2014 report of Humanitarian Outcomes is due to be published shortly before the briefing on 19 August 2014.